

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WELLIN 01812 110503Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 /049 W
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R 110415Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5336
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
AMCONSUL AUCKLAND

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EO:11652:N/A
TAGS:MNUC, NZ
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LABOR PARTY SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT'S
- DECISION ON NEUTRON BOMB

1. AT HIS OWN REQUEST, OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WARREN FREER, CALLED AT THE EMBASSY APRIL 10 AND DELIVERED A LETTER FOR THE AMBASSADOR CONCERNING THE NEUTRON BOMB. IN THE ABSENCE OF THE AMBASSADOR, FREER WAS RECEIVED BY THE CHARGE.

2. FREER'S LETTER, INTER ALIA, STATES THAT THE "DECISION BY PRESIDENT CARTER TO HALT PRODUCTION OF THE NEUTRON BOMB" IS "WELCOMED"; THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION DRAWS "ATTENTION TO THE ABSURDITY OF PRODUCING A NUCLEAR WEAPON WHICH DESTROYS HUMAN LIFE WHILE PRESERVING PROPERTY"; AND ON BEHALF OF THE NZ LABOR PARTY AND ITS LEADER, W.E. ROWLING, OFFERS "SUPPORT" FOR THE DECISION AND ANY FURTHER MOVES BY THE USG TO "CEASE PRODUCTION AND USE OF NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS." EXPRESSING THE "UNEQUIVOCAL" OPPOSITION OF THE LABOR PARTY TO THE PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR ARMS,
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AS WELL AS THE PROMOTION OF A NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE IN THE PACIFIC AND GENERAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, FREER'S LETTER CONCLUDES WITH THE REQUEST THAT THESE PARTY VIEWS BE CONVEYED TO THE PRESIDENT.

3. IN ACCEPTING THE LETTER, THE CHARGE EMPHASIZED TO FREER THAT THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION WAS TO DEFER FOR THE

PRESENT A FIRM DECISION ON THE PRODUCTION OF THE NEUTRON BOMB, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PROCEEDING WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEANS OF DELIVERY. SHE SAID THAT A POSITIVE INDICATION FROM THE SOVIET UNION THAT IT TOO IS INTERESTED IN CURTAILING THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE WOULD LIKELY BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE PRESIDENT'S FINAL DECISION WITH RESPECT TO THE NEUTRON BOMB. THE CHARGE SPECULATED THAT SUCH A FINAL PRODUCTION DECISION MAY BE MANY MONTHS AWAY, BUT THAT THE EMBASSY WOULD FORWARD THE VIEWS OF THE LABOR PARTY IMMEDIATELY TO THE DEPARTMENT.

4. WITH REFERENCE TO THE POINT ABOUT AN APPROPRIATE SOVIET RESPONSE, FREER REMARKED THAT HE HAD CONSIDERED MAKING A "SAME DAY" APPROACH TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN WELLINGTON ON THE MATTER, BUT THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO "WAIT A FEW DAYS." IT WAS UNCLEAR IN HIS SUBSEQUENT REMARKS WHETHER OR NOT HE WOULD GO FORWARD WITH AN APPROACH TO THE SOVIETS, REGARDLESS OF THE SOVIET REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S DEFERRAL.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: REMARKABLE AS IT MAY BE, THE EMBASSY CONSIDERS IT HIGHLY LIKELY THAT FREER WAS UNAWARE OF AND UNBRIEFED ON THE TRUE, LIMITED NATURE OF THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION ON THE NEUTRON BOMB. DESPITE WIDESPREAD LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF THE DECISION AS A "DEFERRAL" RATHER THAN A DECISION TO HALT PRODUCTION, FREER'S ORAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESENTATION AND HIS LETTER INDICATE THAT THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN "DEFERRAL" AND A PRODUCTION HALT WAS PROBABLY NOT UNDERSTOOD. THE CHARGE'S COMMENTS SURELY CLARIFIED THIS DISTINCTION. (FYI: FREER'S APPOINTMENT AT THE EMBASSY WAS PRECEDED BY THE ARRIVAL OF A PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER, APPARENTLY TIPPED OFF BY THE LABOR PARTY, WHO REQUESTED PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH FREER'S PRESENTATION OF THE LETTER TO THE CHARGE. BECAUSE THE EMBASSY DID NOT KNOW WHAT TYPE OF SUBMISSION FREER WAS TO MAKE, PERMISSION WAS REFUSED. THE PHOTOGRAPHER WAS APPARENTLY UNINTERESTED IN TAKING A PHOTO OF FREER ALONE, AND FREER OFFERED NO EVIDENCE THAT HE WAS EVEN AWARE THAT A PHOTOGRAPHER WAS IN THE BUILDING. IN LIGHT OF FREER'S APPARENT CONFUSION OVER THE ISSUE, HE IS PROBABLY GRATEFUL FOR A MINIMUM OF PRESS COVERAGE. END FYI).

6. COPY OF THE LETTER WILL BE POUCHED TO EA/ANP.
HEALY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, OPPOSITION PARTIES, NUCLEAR WEAPONS PRODUCTION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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